A Children's Charter in Wartime

—*Put in terms of the children of the United States*

I. DANGER ZONES

"Guard children from injury in danger zones"

These danger zones line our coasts along the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Gulf—especially where there are military targets, industrial plants, business centers, oil tanks, or the like; also, closely built home areas which might be bombed in an effort to break the morale of defense production workers.

These zones are a first charge on our Civilian Defense program but there is no certainty that inland districts and communities will not be subject to air raids or other forms of attack.

Children first in all plans for protection. The first step is their registration and identification.

Evacuation of children from such zones, if needed, as a sound precaution; advance plans for adequate reception and care in their places of refuge. Mothers to go with their children whenever possible.

"War vacations" for city children.—By the expansion of summer vacation camps conducted under proper supervision, staffed in part by volunteers, and utilizing surplus commodities and other aids, great numbers of children can be removed from exposed districts at relatively little expense. These camp demonstrations would form an admirable test of evacuation methods and an investment for health.

Appropriate immunization of all children against communicable disease.

Helping children to meet the anticipations and realities of wartime.—Childhood anxiety can be as devastating as disease. Not only parents, but doctors, nurses, teachers, recreation leaders, settlement workers, child-welfare and child-guidance workers can help to preserve the child's sense of security, which is his greatest need.

II. DEFENSE AREAS

"Protect children from neglect, exploitation, and undue strain in defense areas"

Vital to the cause of the United Nations is an ever-increasing stream of guns, tanks, and planes and other war equipment and materials from the United States. A thousand communities are involved in their production. Broken working time, due to sickness of the worker, or his wife or child, or to disturbed family life, handicaps production at countless points.

Therefore, the following are essential:

Adequate health, education, and welfare services must be maintained for children and their parents in each of the thousand communities where war production or military camps are established. To accomplish this will require proper staffing with doctors, health officers, nurses, social workers, teachers, recreation leaders, and librarians. It will call for adequate hospitals, clinics, schools, playgrounds, recreational facilities, and day-care centers. Each of these communities will need to mobilize all of its resources within a coordinated plan. Many will need assistance to supplement existing staff and equipment.

The assignment of obstetricians and pediatricians to defense areas should be given special consideration.

Child-guidance clinics should be provided wherever possible to help parents and children overcome insecurity associated with dislocations in family life. Such dislocations exaggerate the normal anxieties of children and create situations that require special service.

School opportunities must be expanded to meet the new demands of expanding populations. This should include nursery schools for young children.

Recreation leaders, group workers, and child-welfare workers are urgently needed in defense communities, where crowded conditions mean overtaxing of facilities for play of little children and of recreation centers for older boys and girls; increase in harmful employment of children; and mounting juvenile delinquency.

III. HOMES IN WARTIME

"Strengthen the home life of children whose parents are mobilized for war or war production"

To children in wartime the home is vital as a center of security and hope and love. To our fighting men the safety and protection of their families is the center of what they fight for. To men on the production front the welfare of their families and homes is basic to morale.

Migration to new and crowded communities, the absence of the father in military service, priorities unemployment on the one hand, and the employment of mothers on the other, are creating problems in homes that affect every member of the family.

Children of our fighting men.—Full provision must be made for the economic needs of children whose fathers are in the service and for medical and hospital care for wives and children.

A Government insurance program for civilians injured or killed as a result of war activities should supplement our social-security program.

Adequate housing is essential to the protection of home life. In housing projects, facilities should be provided for health services and group activities for children.

Employment of mothers and day care of children.—As plans develop for the participation of women in war industry, it must be recognized that the care of young children is the first responsibility of mothers. For children whose mothers are employed or planning to enter employment, it is the responsibility of the community, through adequate planning and support, to see that parents have assistance in planning for their needs and that the children have the best possible care—not forgetting health supervision, opportunity for nursery education and play for the youngest, recreation outside of school hours for those who attend school.

Day care for children in crowded areas where home facilities are limited.—Such children should have opportunities similar to those provided for children of working mothers.

Economic security.—To all parents economically unable to maintain a home for their children, Government help should be extended through such measures as aid to dependent children, general assistance, and benefits for temporary and permanent disability.

School and work.—It is essential that children and youth be sound and well prepared in body and mind for the tasks of today and tomorrow. Their right to schooling should not be scrapped for the duration. Employment of children in war work is a necessary war measure should be analyzed to determine whether full use has been made of available adult manpower and to distinguish between actual labor shortage and the desire to obtain cheap labor. The education and wholesome development of boys and girls should be the first consideration in making decisions with regard to their employment or other contribution to our war effort. This means that no boy or girl shall be employed at wages that undermine the wages for adult labor; none under 14 years of age shall be part of the labor force; none under 16 shall be employed in manufacturing and mining occupations; none under 18 in hazardous occupations.

Health and education.—A measure urgently needed at this time is complete medical examinations of all boys and girls of high-school age at regular intervals, with provision for correction of remediable defects. Provision should be made for a Nation-wide extension of health services for school children, including medical care as needed and health instruction, developed through the cooperation of health and education authorities. The need for health supervision and medical care for youth has been demonstrated until there is no longer any possibility of disregarding it.

Young children.—In the war period special consideration should be given to the needs of all young children for security in the home and for opportunity to grow through association with other children in play and through the reassurance given by adults who have learned to understand their needs. Opportunity for nursery education should be made increasingly available to help meet situations created by the war.

Children in rural areas.—More than half of the children of the Nation live in country districts. Far more than city children they are hit by bad housing, poverty and hard labor, unemployment, inadequate schools, and lack of other community facilities. The war effort must not increase these handicaps.

Participation in civilian-mobilization programs.—Boys and girls should participate in home and community efforts for the war through activities appropriate to their age and ability.

Every city, county, and State should review the needs of its children and youth in the light of these principles through a children's wartime commission or council or an existing organization designated to serve in this capacity, and should devise means to meet evident needs through the cooperative action of Federal, State, and local governments and private agencies.

Every effort should be made to keep the public informed of activities and needs in all phases of service for children and to provide for participation of professional associations, organized labor, farm groups, and other organizations of citizens concerned with children, in the planning and development of these programs.

Provision should be made as rapidly as possible for training the professional workers needed to provide for extension of community programs to increasing numbers of children.

There should be no State lines nor barriers of race or creed impeding what we do for children in our war effort. They may not live in danger zones or defense areas; they will still be subject to the strains of these times. They should not be forgotten Americans. Their future is our future.

IV. CHILDREN THE COUNTRY OVER

"Conserve, equip, and free children of every race and creed to take their part in democracy"

The Children's Charter drawn up at the White House Conference in 1930 and the recommendations of the 1940 Conference are still a challenge to the people. Here it is only in point to single out certain factors that take on new significance in the present war crisis.

Health and children.—Good health in childhood lays the foundation for good health in later life. Children should have health supervision from the prenatal period through adolescence. Special planning is needed to overcome present and future shortages of doctors and nurses. As soon as possible every county in the United States should have public health nursing service, prenatal clinics, delivery care, child-health conferences, and clinic and hospital service for sick children.

Food for children.—The needs of children must be considered first in the event of national or local shortages of foods, especially of milk and the other protective foods. If our country is to be strong, all children must have the food they need for buoyant health and normal growth, and information must be available to parents concerning the family food requirements. Family incomes should be sufficient to assure to each member of the family the right amounts and the right kinds of food. School meals are an effective means of supplementing home nutrition and educating children and their families in good food habits. The extension of penny milk to all children in an important aid in assuring to them their full share of this essential food.

Social services for children.—Communities should be equipped to supplement the care and training given by home and school when the welfare of the child demands it. Child-welfare and child-guidance resources of the State, county, and city governments should be expanded to provide appropriate service and care for all children with special needs.

The right to play.—More than ever in wartime, recreation must be assured for children and youth through the full use and expansion, as needed, of all public and private leisure-time activities.

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A Children's Charter in Wartime

Children's Bureau Commission on Children in Wartime

The Commission held its first meeting March 16–18, 1942, adopted the Charter, and made plans for continuing work to make it effective

Members of the Commission as of March 1942

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We are in total war against the aggressor nations. We are fighting again for human freedom and especially for the future of our children in a free world.

Children must be safeguarded—and they can be safeguarded—in the midst of this total war so that they can live and share in that future. They must be nourished, sheltered, and protected even in the stress of war production so that they will be strong to carry forward a just and lasting peace.

Our American Republics sprang from a sturdy yearning for tolerance, independence, and self-government. The American home has emerged from the search for freedom. Within it the child lives and learns through his own efforts the meaning and responsibilities of freedom.

We have faith in the children of the New World—faith that if our generation does its part now, they will renew the living principles in our common life and make the most of them.

Both as a wartime responsibility and as stepping-stones to our future—and to theirs—we call upon citizens, young and old, to join together to—

I. Guard children from injury in danger zones.

II. Protect children from neglect, exploitation, and undue strain in defense areas.

III. Strengthen the home life of children whose parents are mobilized for war or war production.

IV. Conserve, equip, and free children of every race and creed to take their part in democracy.

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